

Covenant of Closure

Teaching Elder /Commissioned Ruling Elder _____ and the Session of the _____ Presbyterian Church of _____, have reviewed the John Knox Presbytery’s Separation Ethics. They also recognize that when the pastoral relationship between a teaching elder/commissioned ruling elder and a congregation is dissolved, the teaching elder’s/ruling elder’s relationship with members of the congregation is altered in ways that must be respected by all persons involved. The relationship that formerly existed between the minister/ruling elder as pastor and members of the congregation is no longer appropriate. The minister/ruling elder may continue to be a friend, and will continue to be a sister/brother in Christ. However, this teaching elder/ruling elder is no longer the pastor. To clarify the new relationship that will exist upon (list the date of pastor’s last day of service _____), The Rev./CRE _____ and the Session enter into the following covenant:

The Rev./CRE _____ agrees:

1. Not to involve her/himself in any leadership and advisory role (public or private) in _____ Presbyterian Church of _____; nor give advice to anyone involved in a congregational disagreement or dispute.
2. To avoid attending worship or any special events in the life of the church the first two years after the next teaching elder is installed or begins a stated contract/commissioned ruling elder begins a contract, unless explicitly invited to do so upon the initiative of the Moderator of Session alone; to consult with the Moderator of Session prior to attending worship or special events after two years.
3. Not to officiate in any special events in the lives of members of the congregation, including weddings, funerals, memorial services, baptisms, worship leadership, church anniversary activities, etc., unless invited by the Moderator of Session;
4. To refuse request for pastoral services made by members of the _____ Presbyterian Church of _____;
5. To refrain from giving opinions or directions regarding church business that could undermine the transitions necessary for the church and the development of the relationship between the congregation and a new pastor.
6. To take care that any relationships with personal friends who are members of _____ Presbyterian Church of _____ with whom she/he shares common interests and personal compatibility do not violate the above agreement.
7. To write a letter to be published in the church newsletter the month following the departure of the pastor stating these boundaries.

The Session agrees to publish this agreement in the church newsletter/on the church website and submit a copy to the COM and:

1. To encourage the members of the congregation to respect the agreement entered into by _____ as outlined above
 - a. To refrain from asking _____ for pastoral services or to officiate at any special event in one’s personal or family life; to ask her/him as a guest only after consultation with the Moderator of Session.
 - b. To avoid discussing, writing, or emailing _____ regarding matters related to any aspect of the congregation’s life or ask her/his opinion on matters pertaining to the church
 - c. To take care that any relationship with _____ as a friend, based on common interests or personal compatibility, observes the boundaries of this agreement.

It is recommended that the former pastor develop a consistent practice of “unfriending” or “unfollowing” members the congregation on social media and communicate this practice prior to departure.

Clerk of Session _____ Date _____

The Rev/CRE. _____ Date _____